

THE  
OLD WELLAND CANAL  
AND THE  
MAN WHO MADE IT


by

THOMAS C. KEEPER

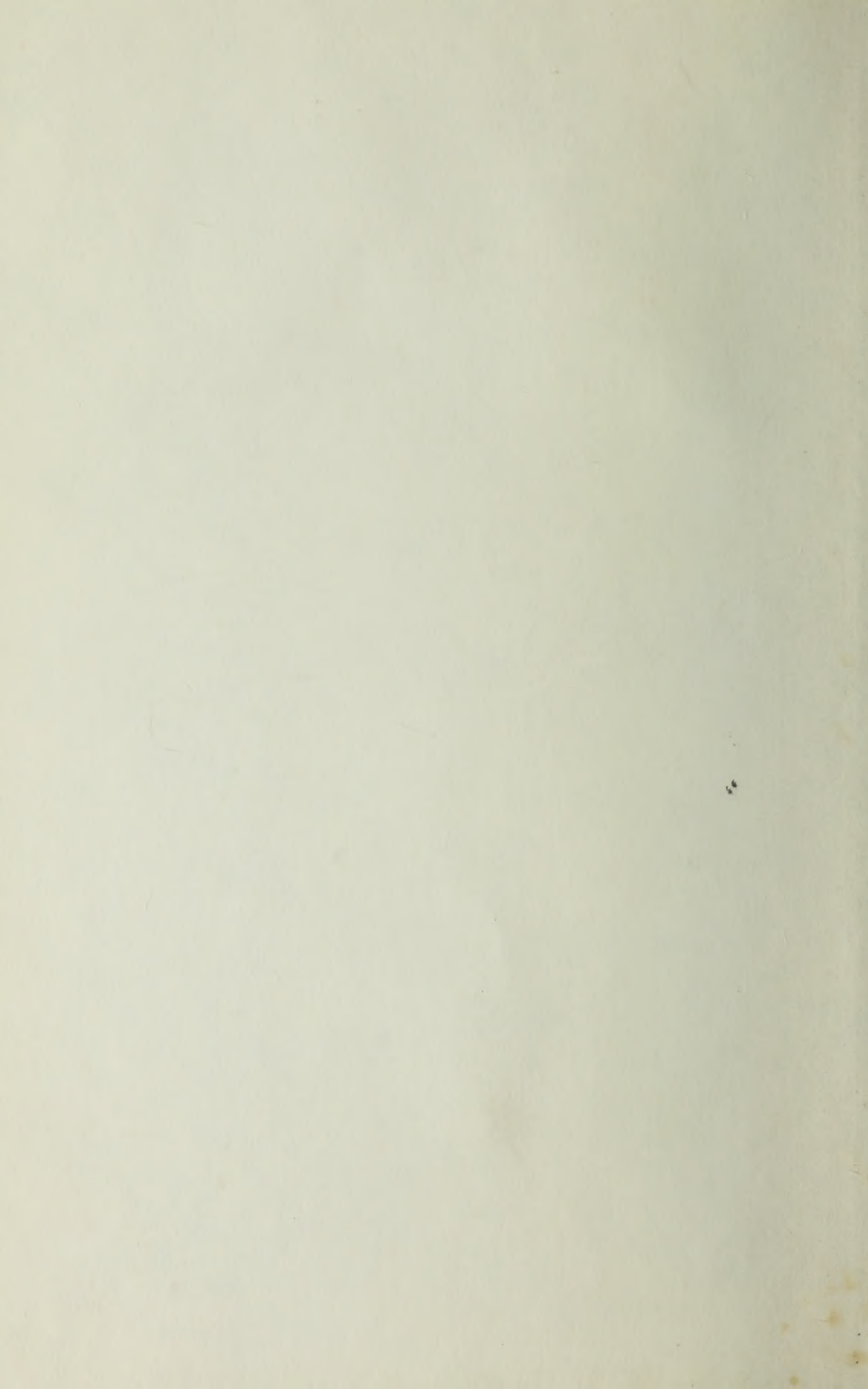
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OLD WELLAND CANAL  
AND THE  
MAN WHO MADE IT.

BY

THOS. C. KEEFER. C.M.G., L.L.D. (McGill)

Past President Royal Society, Canada  
"Officer" Legion of Honour, France  
Past President Canadian Society Civil Engineers  
Past President American Society Civil Engineers  
Past Member of Council Institution, C. E. London

FOREWORD

BY

Mrs. Margaret Hamilton Alden

ST. CATHARINES :  
THE PRINT SHOP, 43 ONTARIO STREET

1920

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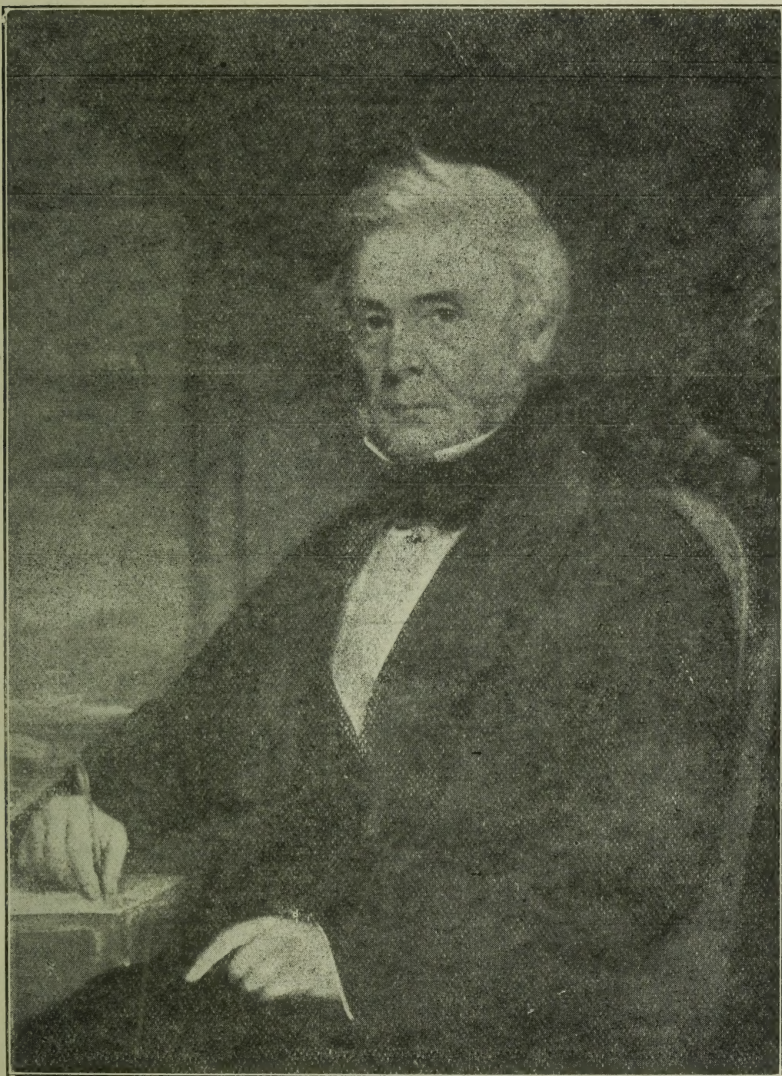
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**NOTE.**—The late Dr. Wilfred Campbell, of the Archives, Ottawa, than whom there was no greater authority on early history of the U. E. Loyalists, in settling a dispute, gave a very important decision when he said that *unsigned, unauthenticated articles* published in newspapers, magazines, or other forms, written twenty-five or more years after the date of the events they are supposed to chronicle, are not of "sixth rate" value in an historical discussion. Hence the importance and value of these original documents, some of which are here published for the first time.





HON. WM. HAMILTON MERRITT

Originator of the Welland Canal, who made the first survey  
of the land, September 23th, 1818  
with George Keefer, Esq., and others

# FOREWORD

The Man and his Vision—An appreciation of the Projector of the Welland Canal and the Founder of the City of St. Catharines

(By Margaret Hamilton Alden)

“Without a vision\*\*\*the people perish,” says the Good Book; and but for the vision of William Hamilton Merritt, who first conceived the idea of the Welland Canal in 1812, we should not today be nearing the centennial of its achievement.

Because his foresight, faith, and untiring effort materialized that idea into a living reality, with its consequent marvellous results—is it not fitting that we should “give honor where honor is due,” and bless the memory of a great and good man who “served well the world” in his generation, and whose “works do follow him”?

It is indeed a far cry from that day of herculean effort and untold hardship to our present—and shall we of this generation, who are reaping the benefits of his labor forget the privations endured by those brave pioneers?

The Archives in Ottawa and elsewhere contain original records and maps which are reproduced here: they give interesting and authentic history of the early days in this neighborhood. By them the story is told with an authority belonging alone to original documents.

A torn and weather-stained document bearing the date Feb 17th. 1796, tells of “A Church at St. Catherines” (spelled with an e), around which a small settlement of some fifty souls had gathered. From the fact that the men of the Queen’s Rangers built, supported and worshipped in this edifice, it is accepted that the church was called after Colonel Butler’s wife. Mrs. Catherine Butler, who

had been a true friend in these trying times to the officers, the men and their families. This church was situated on Yates street, near the corner of St. Paul Street. It was reached by a flight of steps from the present St. Paul street, which followed an Indian trail and was part of the main thoroughfare between Fort Niagara and Fort Detroit.

After the close of the Revolution Governor Simcoe issued an invitation to the disbanded Loyalist Soldiers to settle in the Niagara District. As the men of Butler's Rangers occupied most of the territory on the river and lake shore front, the men of the Queen's Rangers who also answered this appeal, taking up the land beyond settled as far afield as the mountain top. Thither from St. John, New Brunswick in 1796 Major Thomas Merritt followed his late comrades in arms, and with his family, consisting of his wife, a daughter, and a son, William Hamilton Merritt, aged three years, settled on the fourth concession, Grantham Township, on the twelve-mile creek. An early record bearing Major Merritt's name appears on the Niagara Church Register. In October, 1797, an infant daughter, Susan, was baptized by the Rector of St. Marks. Major Merritt owned and operated the mill on the banks of the twelve-mile creek.

It was while endeavouring to obtain a better supply of water for this mill that the idea originated, which ended in the project of building the Welland Canal. The mill was sold in 1869 to Messrs. Norris & Neelon, and later on became the Kinleith Paper Mill. After a residence here of almost half a century Major Merritt died in 1842, aged eighty-three years, and is buried with his wife in St. George's Churchyard. The tower of St. George's Church was erected and twelve free pews set apart in 1845 in memory of Major Merritt and his wife. The land upon which the Church is built was given by the Hon. W. H. Merritt.

Major Merritt was the first sheriff of the Niagara District, which office he held for twenty years, retiring in 1823. He was Cornet in the Queen's Rangers, 1776, under Colonel Simcoe; Major-Commandant Niagara Light Dragoons in the war of 1812-14, and Surveyor of Woods and Forests. He was one of General Brock's pall-bearers, and it was to him, that the American officers surrendered their swords after the victory at Queenston Heights.

The war of 1812-14 fell heavily upon the inhabitants of this neighborhood, the majority of whom left for safer quarters further from the seat of trouble.

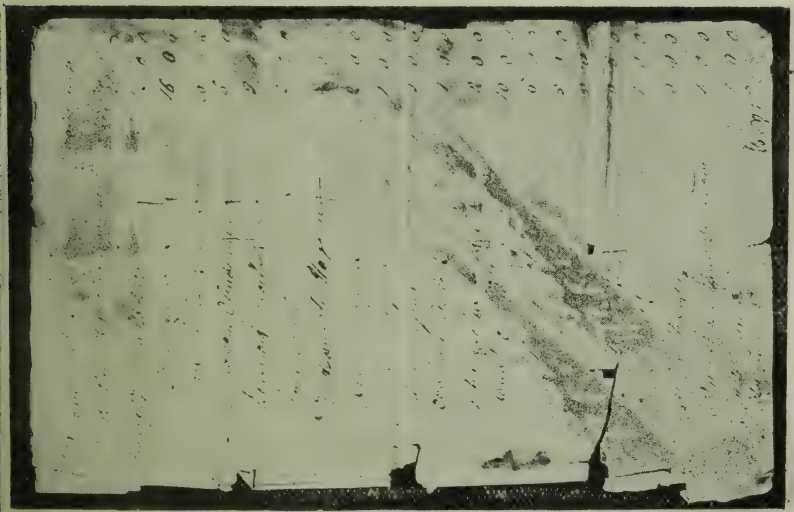
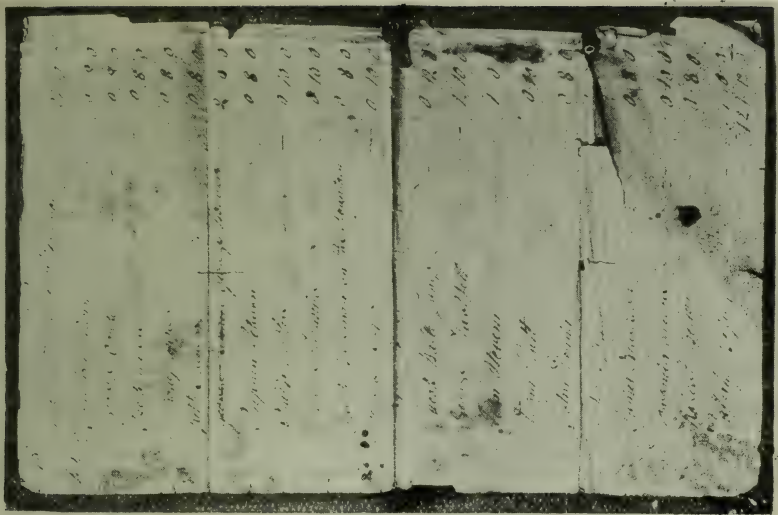
Paul Shipman, for whom St. Paul street is named, proprietor of the earliest known hostelry, gave his name to the settlement for a time.

After the war the Honorable William Hamilton Merritt purchased almost the entire land upon which St. Catharines now stands, entered into business there, carried on his father's mill, established a post-office, and re-named the new settlement St. Catharines (spelled with an a), after his wife. Previous to this "The Twelve," "The Corners," "Huntington," "Shipmans," etc., had given recognition to the small settlement which had gathered around the early church.

The following document antedates the first civic record in the Registry Office, hence its importance and value. It proves that in 1796 a community was established at "St. Catherines" and a Church built there.

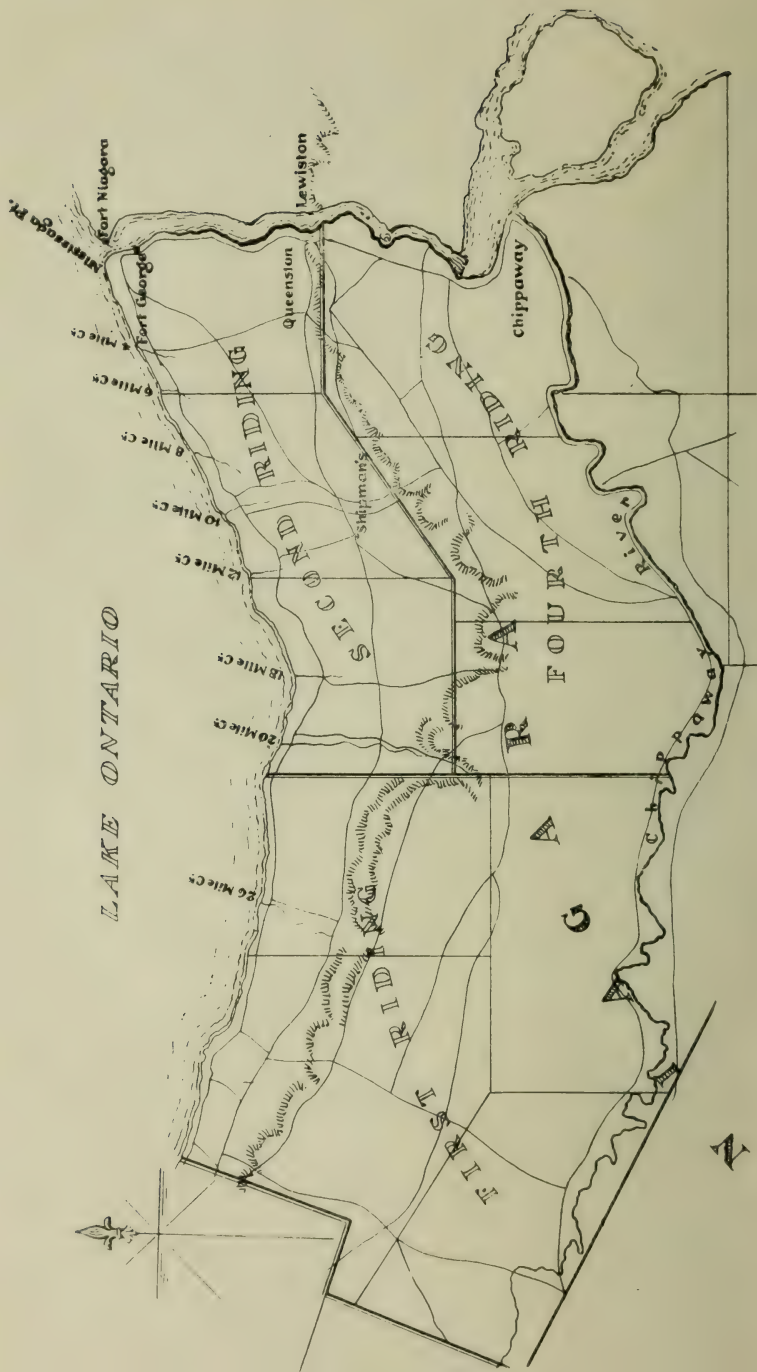
"1796—Appointment to the Church at St. Catherines, with their respective sums next to their names :"

Feb. 17	£ s. d.	1796 Appointment Brought Forward	£107 10 0
John Backhouse-----	12 0 0	Feb. 17	£ s. d.
John Hayner-----	16 0 6	Jonathan Nann-----	0 8 0
Jacob Dittrick-----	26 10 6	George Couke-----	0 8 0
Abraham Clendenen-----	6 1 0	Jacob Appen-----	0 8 0
Benjaman Frolick-----	3 0 0	Anthony Appen-----	0 8 0
Henry Smith-----	3 0 0	Petter Warren-----	0 8 0
Zackariah Hayner-----	2 0 0	George Honner-----	2 0 0
Richard Hayner-----	2 0 0	Stephen Schurn-----	0 8 0
Albert Hayner-----	1 0 0	Philip Metten-----	0 10 0
Adam Hayner-----	3 0 0	Andrew Hanschen-----	0 10 0
Cornelius Follick-----	1 0 0	Jacob Bowman on the Moun- tain-----	0 8 0
John Decon-----	2 0 0	George Keefer-----	0 10 0
Robert Cammel-----	10 0 0	Michael Patton-----	0 10 0
John Turney-----	6 0 0	Jacob Ball, Junr.-----	0 12 0
John Brown-----	5 0 0	George Hartsell-----	1 10 0
William Adz-----	5 0 0	John Stevens-----	1 0 0
Obidiah Hopkins-----	0 8 0	Adam Watt-----	0 10 0
Petter Hopkins-----	1 0 0	John Dennis-----	0 8 0
Asa Watterhouse-----	0 10 0	John Bepey-----	1 0 0
John Willson, Sons—Beav- erdam-----	1 0 0	James Newkirk-----	0 8 0
Hugh Willson-----	0 8 0	Francis Veenen-----	0 10 0
		Robert Bepey-----	0 8 0
		Jabesh Bepey-----	1 0 0
	£107 10 0		£121 12 0



Photograph of the Earliest Record of "St. Catherines."

It is now in possession of the Rector and Wardens of St. George's Church, St. Catharines, Ontario.



Map showing seats of the war in the years 1812, 1813 1814

This map is copied from the original in the archives in Ottawa. It is Chewitt's survey of the County of Lincoln, showing the state of the country in the years 1812, 1813, 1814. It was published in 1818. It shows the settlement to be registered as "Shipmans."



Signature of Catharine Prendergast

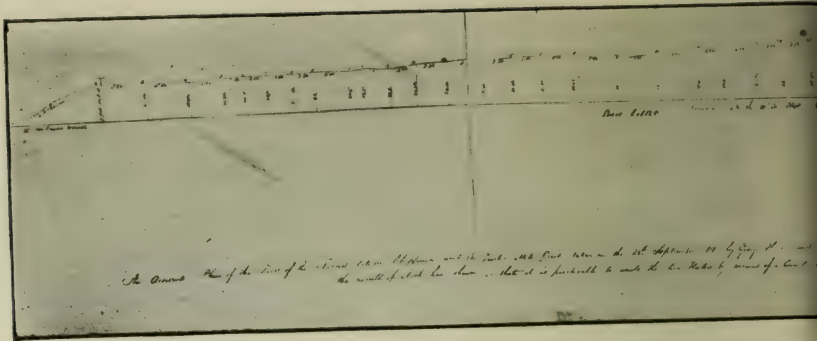
Signature of Catharine Rodman Prendergast, only daughter of Dr. Prendergast, who became the wife of the Honourable William Hamilton Merritt, in 1815. In her honour Mr. Merritt named the young settlement St. Catharines (once Shipman's), using the "a" in spelling as the above signature shows.

Dr. Prendergast was the first physician in this district other than the army surgeons, and his practice extended from the Niagara River to Long Point. He came to this district in 1705, being a U.E.L. Much of their correspondence is dated "Niagara."

In 1911 the late Thomas C. Keefer, Esq., C.M.G., L.L.D. (McGill) of the Rockcliffe Manor, Ottawa, sole survivor of the men who took part in this early work, printed the following pamphlet. He was a son of Mr. George Keefer, the first President of the Welland Canal Company, and a personal friend of Mr. Merritt's.

This brochure, which follows, gives well and clearly the facts of the inception and completion of the canal and of Mr. Merritt's services as a soldier and patriot during the war of 1812; also of the important part he played in the development of other Canadian waterways. Mr. Merritt was fittingly named "The Father of Inland Navigation," and "the best friend of Ontario."

But the Honourable William Hamilton Merritt did more for his country than even his old friend has recorded. Being a man of extraordinary mental calibre, he possessed great executive ability, with a mind clear at every point. United to his unusual intellect was a trust in God as unquestioning as that of a child. Loyalty was his watchword, and Faith the lodestar of his life. More than once he had an opportunity of bettering himself at others' expense, but he never became a rich man through any of his enterprises, although it would have been easy, with his natural gifts, to make himself and his family wealthy, but he preferred to leave to his family a good name rather than great riches.

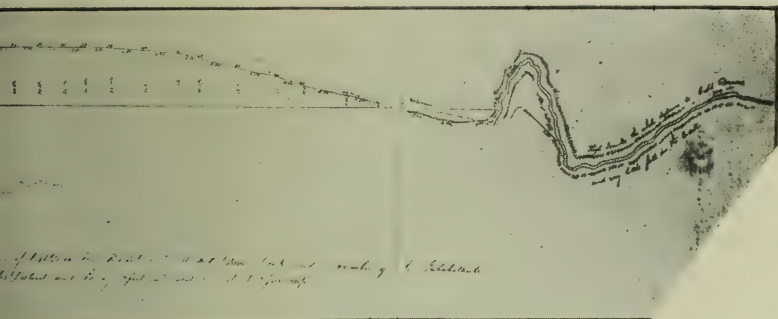


Copy of the Original Survey for Welland Canal

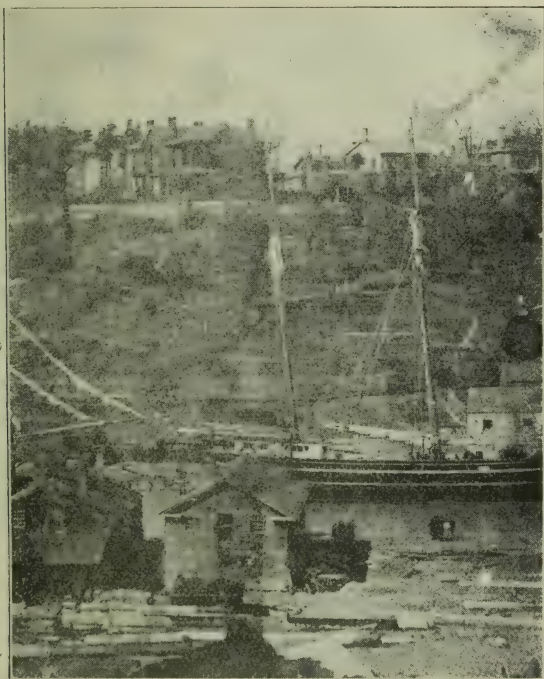
\*An accurate plan of the level of the land between Chippewa and the Twelve-mile Creek taken on the 28th September, 1818, by George Keefer and W. Hamilton Merritt, Esquires, with the assistance of Capt. Decca M. Kindebarrack, M. Hate, Davis Cook, and a number of inhabitants, the result of which has shown us that it is practicable to unite the two waters by means of a canal at a moderate expense, being about two miles distant and having 17 feet fall and only about three feet deep.

Mr. Merritt had every hope that the citizens of the Niagara Frontier would co-operate in the project and he approached the council asking for their support. Especially did he count upon co-operation because some of the men along the Niagara River had applied for a charter to facilitate transportation from lake to lake. Great was Mr. Merritt's disappointment when there was no assistance forthcoming, nor encouragement to build the canal. The story has it that as Mr. Merritt left the meeting his disappointment was so great and his confidence in the prosperity of the country which would follow the completion of this project so strong, that with prophetic vision he said, "Gentlemen, I shall live to see grass grow upon your streets." This he actually did, for with the removal of the Government to Toronto, and the development of St. Catharines under the building of the canal, Niagara became isolated.





Made 28th September, 1818



Photograph of the old Welland Canal, showing Shickluna's Shipyard, with one of his famous sailing vessels in the foreground. Above, Oakhill, residence of the Hon. William Hamilton Merritt, since 1818.

In accepting some of the various offers tendered him, his first thought was "How can I best serve my country?"—not "How can I better myself?" He did not spare himself in the service of his fellowmen: never broke a promise nor repudiated an obligation, nor safe-guarded himself at the expense of others. As one biographer says, "his amiable disposition and sterling integrity secured for him a number of good friends, who were always anxious to serve him."

Mr. Merritt was secretary of the committee which built Brock's Monument in 1853. He succeeded in securing the money from the sale of waste government lands for the erection of public schools and libraries; and early advocated the union of Upper and Lower Canada, and pressed his views upon Lord Durham, the then Governor-General.

The Honorable William Hamilton Merritt developed the idea of a suspension bridge across the Niagara River—the first on this continent, from a suggestion made by his gentle wife. In 1844 two of Mr. Merritt's sons were travelling in Switzerland, and wrote of a wonderful suspension bridge at Fribourg. They described its length, its height, and the manner of its construction, spanning the River Sarren in the midst of a mountainous country.

Reading this letter to his wife, on the bank of the Niagara River, close to the Falls, Mrs. Merritt remarked: "I wonder if a suspension bridge could not be made to span this river?" So strongly did the remark impress itself upon the mind of Mr. Merritt, whose interest in the development of internal transportation was so keen, that he set about immediately to bring the matter to a successful conclusion. The Grand Trunk Ry. was under construction, so a consultation of engineers was arranged for, and on the 8th of March, 1855, the Suspension Bridge was opened for railway traffic—the first passenger train having passed over within six months of the opening of the Great Western R. R., half a year after the idea was first suggested.

Mr. Merritt labored unceasingly for the welfare of the place, which he named and assisted to grow into the thriving community it became. It is not a little significant that the centennial of the first survey of the Welland canal, 1818, should also be the hundredth anniversary of the naming of the City whence its inspiration sprang.

"Honor to whom honor is due."

## COPIES FROM OLD DOCUMENTS.

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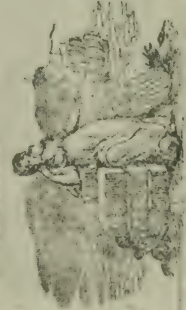
In Jan. 1824, an Act was passed incorporating Messrs. George Keefer, Thomas Merritt, George Adams, William Chisholm, Joseph Smith, Paul Shipman, John DeCew, William Hamilton Merritt, and others, as a Company to be known as the Welland Canal Company, with a capital of Forty Thousand Pounds divided into shares of £12 10s. each.

Very little opposition was offered the Bill, as most intelligent men now saw the necessity of some better means of communication across the Peninsula, and the lucid manner in which Mr. W. H. Merritt explained his project convinced most men of its practicability.

The old record adds—Foremost on the roll stands the late Lord Bishop of Toronto, Dr. Strachan ; The Hon. J. B. Robinson, Chief Justice ; and last though in etiquette first, were Lord Dalhousie and Sir Peregrine Maitland, whose names with the others it is hoped will be for ever indented with the realization of the whilom dreamer, W. H. Merritt and the Welland Canal.

No. *A*

Welland Canal Company's Office,  
St. Catharines, Upper Canada, 182



**THIS CERTIFICATE** entitles,

to *James H. Dunn* to *100* SHARES  
of Stock in the **WELLAND CANAL COMPANY**

of the value of Twelve pounds ten shillings, Pioneered currency (\$50) per share.  
The said shares are Transferable in the Books of the Company, at the Office  
of their Agent in New-York, or at the Company's Office in St. Catharines,  
(where the Dividends will be payable) upon surrender of this Certificate only.

Encl. *D. S. Dunn*

Secy

*John H. Dunn* President.

H. LEAVENWORTH, PRINTER—ST. CATHARINES, U. C.

Original Stock Certificate, Welland Canal Company



GEORGE KEEFER, ESQ.

First President of the Welland Canal Company

The Keefer family is descended from a French Huguenot ancestor who emigrated to New Jersey in 1760. Having taken the royalists side in the American Revolution, their property was confiscated by the American Government, and they moved to Canada and settled in Thorold. They have for four generations been identified with engineering progress in Canada, and most of the country's undertakings have profited by their wide experience.



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AND  
THE MAN WHO MADE IT.

BY

THOS. C. KEEFER, C.M.G., L.L.D. (McGill)

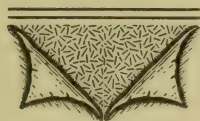
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OTTAWA :

JAMES HOPE & SONS, PRINTERS AND BOOKBINDERS

1911





## THE OLD WELLAND CANAL.

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A Toronto paper, some time ago, published an article on the "Old Welland Canal", by Mr. Battle, of Thorold. This was followed by Mr. Jarvis, in "Saturday Night", referring to a "Prospectus" of the Old Welland Canal Company, dated 1828, with a list of British subscribers, which included the Duke of Wellington, the Right Hon. Mr. Huskisson (who was killed at the opening of the first passenger railway, at Liverpool, in 1830), Alexander Baring, Lord Beresford and some dozen other English shareholders.

This could not have been the original Prospectus of the Welland Canal Company—if there ever was one. It referred to Mr. Merritt's first visit to London, in 1828, when the Welland Canal was nearing completion, upon which occasion he obtained not only these Stockholders, but a grant of £16,000 sterling from the British Government.

The Welland Canal Company was incorporated in January, 1824, and it completed the Canal in November, 1829, when two vessels, one British and one American, were taken from Lake Ontario to Port Robinson, on the Welland River—a distance of about fourteen miles by forty lockages, overcoming about 325 feet of elevation. At this point these vessels descended into the Welland River, and proceeded by sail to the mouth of that River at its junction with the Niagara above the Falls; and thence to Lake Erie, opposite Buffalo. This route was soon abandoned for a direct one from Port Robinson to Lake Erie, crossing the Welland River by an aqueduct. The Canal, however, has retained its original name.

In the Toronto papers Mr. Merritt's name, among others, was mentioned in connection with the Old Welland Canal: but, if ever there was an important public work which might be called the work of one man, that work was the Old Welland Canal, and the man was the late Honorable William Hamilton Merritt, Chief Commissioner of Public Works in the Baldwin-Lafontaine Government of United Upper and Lower Canada, in 1849-50.

When a boy of fifteen, Mr. Merritt had an opportunity to become acquainted with the several obstructions to through navigation on the River St. Lawrence between Prescott and Tide Water. An uncle, whom he had never met, a large ship-owner at St. John, New Brunswick, arrived in Quebec on one of his ships, seeking a cargo of flour and lumber for the West Indies,—and the boy was allowed to go alone to meet him there. He sailed from Niagara to Kingston and from thence went to Montreal by barge in company with some friends of his father, the Sheriff. From Montreal he went alone, by sail, to Three Rivers, where, not finding any boat descending the St. Lawrence, he hired a calèche (a two-wheeled vehicle), and was driven along the River side to Quebec.

His uncle received him warmly on board his ship, and at once fitted him out in "Bluejacket" costume, before sailing for Halifax: and while upon the voyage, by River, Gulf, and Atlantic, he was taught the use of the ropes. Upon arrival at Halifax, where all was then excitement on account of the war with France, his uncle found that the Captain whom he had engaged for the voyage to the West Indies, failed him, and he decided to send his nephew as Supercargo.

On leaving Halifax, the ship was held up by a boat from a British Man O'War, and three of her seamen were impressed and removed :— but by the uncle's influence, their return to the ship was secured, and the vessel proceeded on her voyage, in October, 1808.

The ship encountered violent gales, and springing a leak, was headed for Bermuda where, while anchored in an outer harbour awaiting a survey, a hurricane broke the cable and cast her upon the rocks, where a survey pronounced her unseaworthy.

Master Merritt was detained six weeks before a ship for New York could be found, but did not suffer on this account, because his uncle had correspondents in Bermuda. After twelve days sail, he reached Newport, where he found a vessel sailing for St. John ; and reaching his uncle's home he resumed the studies he had left off at Burlington and Niagara.

After about a year's absence, the sixteen-year old young man bade farewell to his uncle and many friends in St. John, to return home—not by the route he came, but via New York. He took passage in a plaster-laden vessel which followed the coast, sailing by day and taking refuge in one of the numerous harbours of the New England coast by night : but, notwithstanding these precautions, the ship was driven ashore at Martha's Vineyard, where he had to remain until he found a schooner bound for New York, from which he transferred to a sloop which brought him to the old homestead on Long Island, from which all the family had been driven to St. John, in 1783. Here he found an uncle and aunt with whom he remained several days ; then sailing up the Hudson to Albany, he went from thence to the Niagara River, crossing at Queenston.

As Mr. Merritt had served his country some years before he commenced the Welland Canal, a short account of this is due to his memory :—because he was in the most important battles of the Niagara frontier during the three year's war of 1812, 1813 and 1814, viz :—Queenston Heights : Fort George : Stoney Creek, and Lundy's Lane

He had been gazetted both as Ensign and Lieutenant in the Militia, before the War, and before he was of age. His father, Sheriff Merritt (whose shrievalty extended from Niagara to Detroit) had been a Cornet of Dragoons in "Simcoe's Rangers" during the Revolutionary war of 1776,—was placed by Brock in command of the mounted Militia at Niagara. Both father and son raised mounted Companies as soon as war was declared, reported to General Brock at Niagara, and were ordered to patrol the bank of Niagara River, between the Lakes. The father received an order from General Brock to send his son to Delaware on the River Thames, with instructions to keep open communication with Amherstburg—toward which place an American army was marching, under General Hull. The son carried out these orders, and returning to Niagara, and finding Brock had gone to York, crossed the Lake and reported to him there. Brock expressed his satisfaction and sent him back to Delaware with despatches and a detachment of men. Being detained on the way by Colonel Talbot, he did not reach Detroit until the day after the surrender of Hull's army,—notwithstanding which, Brock included him for the Detroit Medal.

After Brock's death at Queenston, Major-General Sheaffe, who succeeded in command, ordered Major Merritt and his son to advance with their Dragoons and support the gathering Regulars, Militia, and

Indians under Brant, Norton and Ker ;—and after the surrender, Major Merritt was deputed to receive the American officers swords. Lieutenant Merritt, with his troop, patrolled the river bank until November, with the exception of a week's absence, when he was sent to the Detroit River on a confidential mission from General Sheaffe to Colonel Prector.

The enemy having been defeated all along the line in 1812, the Militia, Horse and Foot, returned to their homes for the winter ; but in February 1813, Lieutenant Merritt received a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Harvey, of the 49th. British Regiment, asking him to raise a troop of horse for the purpose of patrolling the Niagara River bank, where the enemy were collecting in force, having obtained possession of Lake Ontario. In April 1813, the Militia were called out, and ten days after, York was captured, plundered and the public buildings burnt ; after which the enemy crossed on the same day to Niagara, and with their long powerful ship guns, assisted by those of Fort Niagara, on the American side of the River, bombarded and destroyed Fort George, and later landed an army with two Generals. The British forces were obliged to retire toward Burlington Heights, Lieutenant Merritt's troop covering their retreat. The posts at Chippewa and Fort Erie were withdrawn to Beaver Dams, thus leaving the enemy in possession of both banks of the river from Lake to Lake.

The enemy, under two Generals, with a force several times as large as the British, advanced unopposed as far as Stoney Creek, where they encamped for the night. Colonel Harvey of the 49th. Regiment, advised and volunteered to lead a night attack,—as their only hope,

which General Vincent sanctioned and accompanied, with Lieutenant Merritt as his Staff Officer. The attack was eminently successful, both of the enemy's Generals being captured, and most of their artillery—with the bayonet.

On returning alone from the fight, during which (he says in his Journal) General Vincent became separated from the main body, he brought in two prisoners, "skulkers" of the scattered enemy.

Five weeks later, Lieutenant Fitzgibbon secured the surrender at Beaver Dams, of Colonel Boerstler and six hundred men, Lieutenant Merritt's troop escorting the prisoners to their quarters.

At Lundy's Lane, the last Battle of the War, Captain Merritt was Staff Officer to General Riall. The fight continued into the late twilight, when it was difficult (with both armies English-speaking) to distinguish friend from foe. The British General, Riall, was severely wounded, and when Captain Merritt was returning from carrying an order from him, he was surrounded, as he has stated in his Journal, "by six fellows who were skulking from the fire, which then raged with fury," and taken prisoner, with twenty-eight others, including his wounded General. He wrote, that they fought against much superior numbers, and stated, "On my way to captivity, I heard the fire renewed and knew that the 10th. had arrived, who drove the enemy completely off the field."

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Mr. Merritt took a warm interest in his comrades of 1812 who had served with him through the war. When in Parliament, in after years, on looking over the Pension List, he noticed the absence of the

name of one of his near neighbors, whom he knew had been severely wounded by a musket ball, through the body, at the battle of Niagara, when Fort George was taken, and on enquiry, discovered that the omission was because the soldier had refused to take the prescribed oath, which was that his wound had incapacitated him from earning a living. Mr. Merritt had the name added to the Pension List, regarding it more in the light of a decoration than one of compensation.

Mr. Merritt showed very strong sympathy for the wives and families of those Members of Parliament, and others who suffered for their participation in the outbreak of 1837, and interested himself on behalf of the wives and children of the banished ones. He signed the petition for the commutation of the death penalty upon Lount and Matthews, and he wrote letters to Sir John Franklin, the Governor of Van Dieman's Land, on behalf of the wives of Wait and Chandler which secured to their husbands the freedom of the Island.

### THE OLD WELLAND CANAL.

In 1818, four years after the War, Mr. Merritt, accompanied by a few neighbors, explored a route from the Twelve Mile Creek, at its junction with Lake Ontario, to the Welland River at Port Robinson—about fifteen miles—from whence there was navigation into Lake Erie by the Welland and Niagara Rivers. He then formed a Joint Stock Company, and on the 19th day of January, 1824, an Act was passed incorporating George Keefer, George Adams, Thomas Merritt, William Chisholm, W. H. Merritt and others, as the Welland Canal Company, with a capital of £40,000, divided into shares of £12-10s each.

As soon as the Company was incorporated, Mr. Merritt began a

tour to York, Kingston, Montreal and Quebec, seeking subscriptions for the Stock, and met his first encouragement at York, from the Hon John Henry Dunn, Provincial Treasurer, and John Beverly Robinson, Attorney-General, afterwards Chief Justice of Upper Canada;—at Kingston, from Messrs. Hagerman, Markland, Macauley and Commodore Barry;—at Gananoque, from the MacDonalds, who had large mills there:—at Prescott, from Billa Flint, and at Montreal (where he had called a meeting of the merchants at the Exchange Hotel), from Gates and Dunn, who undertook to canvass the City.

From Quebec he wrote, that he would succeed in his object, as his old friend, the Hon. James Irwin, had taken it up. Here a meeting of the Board of Trade was called, when the first £1,000 of Stock in the Welland Canal Company was subscribed. He also called upon Lord Dalhousie, and at a second interview with the Governor-General the latter promised to bring the matter before the Home Government.

While at Quebec, he had a circular printed in French, showing that the Welland Canal would open water communication with the French Canadian Settlements on the Detroit River.

On his return from Quebec, March 30th., he went around by New York to see Governor De Witt Clinton, the originator of the Erie Canal. In May, he drew up a memorial to Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, enclosing therewith an outline Map of the proposed Canal to connect the waters of the Welland River with Lake Ontario, and at the same time he wrote to his old friend and comrade during the War, Sir John Harvey, then Commander of the forces at Quebec, calling his attention to the Canal question from a military



point of view for the transmission of vessels and troops between the Lakes, and closed his letter as follows: "Our Commissioners would never survey or level the route, alleging it to be too near the frontier, and consequently we were obliged to employ an Engineer ourselves and endeavor by similiar exertion on our part to prevent the States people from taking our frontier all for themselves,"—and closed as follows: "I can bring every part of this route forcibly to your recollection. It commences ten miles up the Chippewa (Welland) River; passes De Cew's (the house we retreated to after we were beaten from Fort George) and terminates at the Twelve Mile Creek, the place where our boats generally landed during the War."

The Erie Canal at this time, was fast approaching completion (it was opened in 1825) and experienced Engineers, contractors and labourers would be available.

In November, 1824, contracts were let for the construction of the Canal from the Welland River to Lake Ontario, covering the forty wooden locks, each one hundred and ten feet long by twenty-two feet wide in the chamber, with a depth of water of eight feet;—at the price of £550 per Lock, and, on the 30th of that month, the first sod was turned by the President of the Company, George Keefer, Esq., of Thorold.

As soon as the work was put under contract in 1825, an offer of free water power, forever,—for two flour mills, each containing four runs of stones, which were to be completed on or before the arrival of the water to them—was advertized. This offer was accepted by George Keefer, Esq., and General Beach, of Rochester, New York, but was only

carried out by the former,—General Beach having withdrawn, from want of confidence in the completion of the Canal.

At almost the first meeting of the Welland Canal Company at Niagara, (after Canal business had been disposed of) Mr. Merritt opened a subscription list for the purpose of sending surveyors to the Rapids of the St. Lawrence with a view to Canals required there, and succeeded in getting the work of the survey completed with the funds there subscribed; and in 1830, after the Welland Canal was completed, he induced the Government to send the Chief Engineer of the Welland Canal (who came from the Erie Canal) with his assistants, to make further surveys at the St. Lawrence Rapids.

In February 1827, Mr. Merritt was again sent to Quebec, bearing despatches from Sir Peregrine Maitland to Lord Dalhousie, who laid the Canal question before the Quebec Legislature whereupon a Bill was immediately brought in, authorizing a grant of £25,000, which was passed.

Mr. Merritt's father-in-law, Dr. Pendergast, occupied a prominent position at Albany as State Senator, and aided him by introductions to capitalists in New York, some of whom became Stockholders in the Welland Canal Company.

More money being required, Mr. Merritt went to England, via New York, in 1828. While in New York, Mr. J. B. Yates, who, more than any other individual, had subscribed and induced other Americans to take Stock in the Canal, again subscribed; and became security for \$40,000 to carry on the work for a time.

In 1836 the Liberals obtained control in the Lower House at Toronto, and appointed a Committee to investigate charges brought against Mr. Merritt—the Province having up to that time invested about a million of dollars in the Canal.— Mr. Merritt placed every book and paper in the Canal office before this Committee, covering a dozen years from the beginning of the Canal. The report of this Committee was—that they “could find no case of wrong doing on the part of anybody connected with the Canal.”

The dividing ridge between the head waters of the Twelve Mile Creek and the Welland River, involved a deep cutting of seventy feet, over two miles in length, containing a million and a quarter cubic yards, in order to feed the Canal from the Welland River. Before the necessary depth was reached quick sand was encountered, and it became imperative to seek a source of supply over twenty feet higher than that of the Welland River.

Fortunately the country between the Deep Cut and Lake Erie as well as the Grand River, was so favorable that by a dam six feet high across that River, water could be got at a height sufficient to give the necessary depth above the quicksand in the Deep Cut. This Feeder crossed the Welland River by an aqueduct some miles above Port Robinson, at which latter place connection was made with the Welland River by two Locks descending into that stream.

The Dam, the Feeder of over twenty miles, the Aqueduct and the two Locks connecting with the Welland River, were begun and completed in 1829, so that on the 2nd day of November, in that year, as a boy of eight years, I saw a British and an American vessel passing my

home on their way up from Lake Ontario to the Welland River, having to break through ice in the Deep Cut. This year's expeditious work would compare favorably with modern enterprize:—the explanation of which is, that the Dam, Aqueduct, Locks and Waste Weirs were all built of white pine, then abundant along the line.

The New York Spectator pronounced the Canal "well designed, and carried on with an energy unusual in that country."

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Mr. Merritt in 1832 represented Haldimand, a reform constituency, but voted with the so called "Family Compact" at Toronto, not only because it supported the Canal, but because his constituents became directly interested in the Canal, after the bottom of the Deep Cut rose up, and a higher level of feeder (which involved a dam across the Grand River in Haldimand County) became necessary. Moreover the feeder was the forerunner of a navigable connection with the Welland Canal which led to the extension of the Grand River navigation to Brantford

Mr. Merritt sailed from New York to England, in March 1828 and on reaching London, he at once called upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who appointed the next day for an interview; but, after calling every day for a week without success, he wrote to Messrs. Goulburn, Huskisson and Hay, stating urgency of the situation, and received an appointment the same afternoon.

The following day he prepared a statement for the "Times", and repeatedly sought an interview with the Editor for the purpose of explaining his scheme, but was always put off with the same excuse, "Too busy just now." At last he determined to bring the matter to a

head, and when the usual answer came, he replied that he could describe the whole affair in five minutes. The Editor immediately pulled out his watch, saying, "Now as you are a man of business, I will give you that time." Mr. Merritt at once drew his map from his pocket, and spreading it before the Editor, said, "Here is Lake Erie, here are the Falls of Niagara, this is Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence and the Atlantic, and here is the route of the great Welland Canal." He immediately closed up his map, and ended the interview. In the next issue of the paper, an article appeared which had a marked effect upon the success of his mission.

The Company required and received assistance from the Legislature of Upper Canada, which was continued until, in 1834, after four days debate, on motion of Mr. Robinson, brother of the Chief Justice, the Legislature, by a majority of *one*, decided that the Welland Canal should become the property of Upper Canada.

Dr. Strachan, first Bishop of York, and one of the ablest Members of the Legislative Council, in supporting the motion for the purchase, predicted that, "the Welland Canal will, in time, be equalled in importance only by the Canal which may hereafter unite the Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean through the Isthmus of Darien."

The Stock of the Welland Canal Company was to be paid for by Bonds of the Province, and Mr. Merritt made a trip to England in order to negotiate the sale of these Bonds, having previously advised the Stockholders not to dispose of their Stock at a discount, for which he was thanked by the Duke of Wellington, whose Stock was sold, and the proceeds given to found a Scholarship in King's College, Toronto.

Mr. Merritt was summoned, while in England, before a Special Committee of the House of Commons, and was examined on almost every subject in connection with Canada. In answer to questions, he stated that the chief disadvantage of Upper Canada, was the want of a seaport—as possessed by New York, New England and the States fronting on the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico; and he advocated Union of the two Provinces and the construction of the St. Lawrence Canals.

Asked as to what causes he attributed the difference in the value of lands, between Upper Canada and New York State, he replied that it was the want of Canals to overcome the Rapids of the St. Lawrence, and thus reach a Seaport.

Land was not one-fourth part of the value that it had in New York State. The State of New York wanted to reach a seaport, and De Witt Clinton carried a vote for the Erie Canal against the vote of every member from New York City. The example of New York State should be followed; the St. Lawrence should be made navigable for Lake vessels, *as it would make a Sea Coast of all the Lake Shores.*

Mr. Merritt was, at that time, a man of thirty-five years of age, and had been in business in Canada for fifteen years, and was as well qualified to give information on all questions regarding the condition and wants of the country as any one living in it.

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In 1844, while “picnicing” with his family near Niagara Falls, letters, just received from his sons travelling in Switzerland, were

read, in which was described, and the length of span given, of the "Fribourg Suspension Bridge", just then opened,—the first suspension bridge constructed for railway as well as road traffic. Mr. Merritt at once sent an Engineer to ascertain the width, between banks, of the Niagara River below the Falls and above the first Rapids. He then formed a Joint Stock Company, by which the bridge was constructed and opened in 1849, and was the first bridge of any kind connecting either Upper or Lower Canada with the United States; and one of the first, if not the first, Railway Suspension Bridges on this continent.

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In 1850, Mr. Merritt, as Chief Commissioner of Public Works, visited Ottawa, and examined the Government property in the City at the Chaudiere Falls. His first question to me was, "Why has this water power not been made use of?", and was told that it was a Government Reserve. It was not long before the property was advertised in the New York and New England papers, and the result was a re-organization of the timber trade upon the Ottawa: an "Upper Ottawa Improvement Company" was formed, since when, the lumbermen have acted in concert, instead of independently, as before.

Sir Richard Scott has recently shewn that he had been working for years to have this water power made use of.

#### THE WELLAND RAILWAY.

The growth of commerce upon the Upper Lakes, due to the opening of the Erie Canal chiefly, and later to the Welland Canal,

led to an almost annual increase, both in size and draft of water, of vessels plying on Lake Erie, Huron and Michigan, especially those making the long voyage from Chicago to Buffalo, traversing the whole length of three great Lakes and the Detroit River.

There was from the first a regular line of sailcraft, and later screw-steamers, called "propellers", sailing from Oswego on Lake Ontario to the Upper Lakes. The size of these boats and their draft of water, was limited by the Welland Canal Locks, but their downward cargo could be increased if some of the grain could be lightered between the Lakes by means of elevators at each end of the Canal, if these elevators were connected by about 25 miles of railway. For this purpose, Mr. Merritt formed a Joint Stock Company, with power to issue Bonds, which with the Stock, were put upon the British Market; a considerable portion also was taken by his home town, St. Catharines.

In 1858, a series of misfortunes commenced. First, his residence was destroyed by fire:—then his favorite son, in 1859, returned from an unsuccessful mission to England, on behalf of the Welland Railway (in which the private fortune of the family was involved), and died after two days' illness. Mr. Merritt also failed to induce the Government (as owners of the Welland Canal) to come to the aid of this Railway, which now forms a part of the Grand Trunk System.

In 1861, he was elected by acclamation, a Member of the Legislative Council of United Canada and took his seat at Quebec, from whence he opened a correspondence with the Board of Trade at Detroit, with reference to the trade of the St. Lawrence, *as the only direct and cheap route to the ocean.*



He again went to Quebec, and endeavored to organize a Company to be known as the St. Lawrence Navigation Company, to carry grain (brought by the Welland Railway to the elevators at Port Dalhousie) to Europe.

In 1864, he interviewed the Government with reference to the deepening of the St. Lawrence route. This was his last work :—His health was failing, as well as that of his wife, who, in 1864, died suddenly, (having been out in her carriage the day before) and upon the approach of warm weather he was advised to seek change of air, and decided to go to the seaside. On reaching Montreal, via the St. Lawrence route, he became so seriously ill that he was advised to return home as soon as possible. He was carried on board the steamer, and on the 5th of July, 1864, while passing through the Cornwall Canal (the Canal, for the construction of which, he had procured the Act when in the Legislature at Toronto, in 1834) he passed away ; having survived his wife less than six months.

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Mr. Merritt was not a politician :—He entered Parliament to carry out his views, if possible, and whether he succeeded or failed, he retired as soon as that was ascertained. Although a Liberal, he supported the party in power in Upper Canada, because their leaders were, from the first, friends of the Canal. He refused to oppose the election of the brother of the Chief Justice, at the request of his party, in the County which he himself had represented, because Mr. Robinson and his brother, the Chief Justice, had always been friends of the Canal.

From the first, Mr. Merritt saw that the great question for Canada (Upper and Lower), was the improvement of the navigation of the River St. Lawrence; and in confirmation of his views, it may be here recalled that Lord Elgin, shortly after his arrival as Governor General, offered a Prize "For the best Treatise on the bearing of the St. Lawrence and Welland Canals on the interests of Canada as an Agricultural Country,"—and it is only necessary to refer to the geographical position of the St. Lawrence waters to see the importance of this route.

Seven years before his death, Mr. Merritt wrote a letter to me, in which he said, "In my opinion the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and the interior of this continent requires the establishment of a better line of steamers to Quebec than to New York. Nothing less than this will divert or regain the trade. That will, in my judgment, effectually."

In view of the great work of the re-constructed Montreal Harbour Commission, and the Dominion Government's work of deepening the St. Lawrence, this may not prove an impossibility:—because Quebec is nearer, by several hundred miles, to any port in Europe or Africa, than is New York or New Orleans. An "air-line" from any port in the British Channel to Toledo on Lake Erie, will be found to run in the valley of the St. Lawrence, and nearly everywhere within the waters of the same. The Straits of Belle Isle are upon an airline to the centre of the British Isles, from Lake Erie;—which line lies nearly everywhere within, or very near to, the waters of the St. Lawrence;—and, when open, these Straits shorten the voyage three hundred miles

as compared with the route south of Newfoundland. This St. Lawrence route also escapes many of the fogs and storms caused by the Gulf Stream where it is turned eastward by the banks of Newfoundland.

These Straits thus connect, by the shortest possible line, and with the cheapest mode of transportation, the Great Lakes,—the greatest food-collecting basins on this continent—with the greatest market in Europe for the same ; and when our Canals are enlarged and deepened, will permit through transportation from the Great Lakes to European ports ;—an ideal situation which would have realized Mr. Merritt's ambition to the full.

The influence of the St. Lawrence route extends to the Rocky Mountains : the greater portion of the grain from the Prairies may be expected to seek an outlet by Lake Superior :—and, in view of the opening up of our north country by two more Transcontinentals as well as numerous Provincial Railways—a tonnage from Forest, Field and Mine, which no man can estimate, must seek its outlet to the ocean by the St. Lawrence route.

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The City and Citizens, as well as the Harbour Commissioners of Montreal (authorized thereto by the Dominion Parliament), have united in erecting a well deserved monument to the late Hon. John Young, for his services in deepening the Channel below Montreal :—the greater part of the cost of which monument was contributed by the Dominion. Should not Canada do the same on the Old Welland Canal to the memory of Mr. Merritt ?

















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